

# OUR COMMON FAITH

## And Other Lectures

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

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## **OUR COMMON FAITH**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(Presentation made at a seminar arranged by the Commission for Peace and Human Development at the HRCP Auditorium (Aiwan-i-Jamhoor) on January 26, 2006)*

We, as human beings, have a common origin, a common path to follow and a common goal to achieve. We have ingrained in our blood the attributes of love, virtue, knowledge and understanding. We have been endowed with invaluable creative powers, for the exercise of which all the things in the universe have been placed at our disposal with orders of compliance. All that we need to benefit from these is an intension and a will on our part, and a deep understanding to the effect that the universe, the world and whatever is contained in it, is for the purpose of developing ourselves individually and beatifying our respective social environments and the world at large.

Another important point to be understood is that we, as human beings, have been born in the best form and bearing. But during our life process we develop various thoughts, and chose different ways, through our own ventures. We have been rendered free from any shackles to make our own decisions as to what to do and what not to do. We have, however, been given clear guidelines about how to live in the best manner in this world of ours without any compulsions on us, while having the satisfaction that we have lived as we ourselves willed. The only directive given to us precisely is that each one of us should prefer the collective advantage of the society to our personal benefits; that we should be good to others and take part in raising their physical, mental and spiritual levels.

We must also understand fully that we, as human beings, have been clearly guided by God – God of all human beings alike – and his prophets, to the two cardinal principles of “faith” and “righteous deeds” (service to humanity). The principle of ‘faith’ enables us, to our own benefit, to accept God as the sole Creator, Sustainer, Owner

and the ultimate Ruler of this universe. The principle of "service to humanity" entails us to be good to others, serve other human beings in an unprejudiced manner and to build the society in which we are born. These form the essence of the teachings of the prophets imparted in the various stages of history. These very principles also form the bases of unity of humankind. It is only through practicing these that we can also attain the purpose of achieving inter-religious harmony. But the problem that has arisen is that every religion professes its own god whereas God is one for all human beings, and from Him alone guidance and succour could be sought.

It has also to be realized that superiority of the one person over the other is determined not because of adherence to a particular religious group but only because of good standard of character and behaviour in one's dealings with others. The fact, however, is that there are only two main categories of human beings that exist in the world on the basis of faith viz. the "believers" and the "non-believers". To create a third category on the basis of religion is erroneous. The various religious forms that exist today under different names were created after the departure of the prophets, not in their lifetime. They were created either by those indulging in disproportionate reverence of the prophets due to impulsiveness, or by the vested interests in a society. Religions have a tendency to divide human beings on the basis of various prejudices, and create hatred of persons who adhere to religions different from them. They create in a person sense of superiority over others. They even step up religious persecution. In order to find out the real path that we should tread in life, we must understand the purpose behind the creation of the human being. But in order to understand this purpose, we must apprehend the relationship that mankind bears with the universe and its Creator. This relationship with God is direct and needs no intermediaries. This apprehension of relationship with God should be mature and of such nature as though we are actually seeing this reality with our own eyes, and that we have gained absolute conviction on this account. Unless a reality is seen it cannot be known and understood because seeing a thing is the source of knowing and understanding it. Hence through observation of these realities with open eyes, and a clear perception, the realization grows

clear in the human mind that the universe has been created by a Self-Sustained Being, and that the human being is the focus of all creation and a partner of the Creator in fulfilling His intent of creation. On account of this we are elevated in our own estimation and stand out as different persons. Thus we begin to feel a deep relationship between the Creator and us. Such a doubt-free understanding is a prerequisite for the human being to play his part in this world successfully. We must accept the truth that God is for all humanity and not for any sections of people or religious groups.

Whatever travail and disorder we see in the world has not been brought about by the Creator, for He has created everything unblemished and beautiful; it is, in fact, the handiwork of the human beings who have failed to perceive the Creator rightly and follow His directions truly, in founding a just social order. They have kept themselves confined to the pursuit of amassing wealth and acquiring needless comforts and luxuries for themselves to the exclusion of others who have been denied the basic necessities of life, and debarred from utilizing the means of production to their advantage. Such exploiters rely on lies, hypocrisy and exploitation of the weak. As a result, the society is split into numerous hostile classes, which in turn generate hatred, animosity, intolerance and arrogance among people.

Once uniformity of thought is attained to an appreciable extent, better relationship is affected amongst people, and they become inclined to cooperate closely with one another to form a meaningful collective life. This new and healthy attitude in life is not limited to fellow human beings alone. It leads to development of loving relationship of the human being even with the flora, the fauna and other creatures of the world. Thus a good human being starts behaving nicely with every one and becomes a source of comfort and relief to others. In this way a human being makes life beautiful and fruitful, and the common people begin to be attracted towards him, and extend their hearty cooperation in his efforts for bettering the human society. Such persons are "the believers". Those, on the other hand, who do not come forward to serve humanity for the love of the Creator, are "the disbelievers", the "hypocrites" and the

“transgressors”, and they can accomplish nothing useful for the good of society and humanity.

Another aspect of life is the ever-continuing process of new creations at the hands of human beings, which is an ongoing process that keeps unfolding at every moment, and in all periods of history. On this positive process depends human progress. Hence those who do not participate in this process become a prey to retrogression, and instruments in the hand of the vested interests for maintaining the status quo, and thus cause immeasurable harm to humanity. The Truth is that the Creator has endowed His creation - the human being - with invaluable and unbounded creative powers, and has placed all the things in the universe at his disposal for the exercise of these powers. All that an individual, therefore, needs to benefit from these is an intention, a strong will, and a deep understanding that the universe is for the purpose of developing and beautifying the world at the hands of the human being. Thus the human beings have not been created by way of sport; they have been given a clear objective of continuing to better their economic, social, political and cultural conditions, and to transform the present and the future world into a better shape. This process should be continued till such time as class disparities, injustice and oppression are rooted out from the society and the world is changed into a peaceful, blissful, fraternal and prosperous place to live in.

The greatest obstacle in this process of creation is adherence to the past traditions and religious dogmas and the desire to live in the past. Thus those who lag behind in the creative process become backward economically and socially, immature and weak politically and ineffective and unproductive culturally. They fall prey to ignorance, narrow-mindedness and frustration. Adherence to worn-out and out-dated traditions, instead of enabling the human beings to move forward and touch the heights of excellence, hurls them deep down into the abyss of degradation, and life becomes stale and ugly for them. That is why such lowly people treat others oppressively and cruelly while using the name of God in their wrongdoings, whereas affirmation of God should bring out in one the sentiment of love and affection. The whole system of religious

monopoly, and the institutions set up by the religious elite, are based on delusive and negative philosophies, and are the root cause of our dilemma. The religious order separates one human being from the other. They privilege one kind of people as superior and brand others as inferior. They breed hatred, which is against love. Hence all such belief systems are in effect a declaration of war against humanity and not a declaration of love for it.

Another vital thing to understand is that it is on account of the force of love, attained on account of God's love for His creation, that a human being treats others lovingly and sacrifices time and money, even one's life, for the sake of those who are in need or are suffering hardship. Another anomaly is that God is grossly misunderstood as an entity to be feared, because of misplaced religious dogmas. On the other hand, God is to be admired, revered and loved. It is this very emotion of love for God that makes one's heart yearn for meadows and gardens, for becoming beautiful personally, from in and outside, and radiating love and beauty all around. It creates in one the desire that the people get into the minimum of grief and suffering. Therefore, to love one another, and to benefit each other, should become a part of our mindset and, instead of wars, strife, destruction and ruination we should crave for peace and tranquility, construction and development everywhere. It is the emotion of love alone that stands in the way of negative thought and action, and eventually prepares a human being to engage in a most arduous struggle to defeat the spurious forces of the world.

The emotion of love also generates tolerance, and puts an end to the harmful racial, linguistic, religious and sectarian prejudices that prevent one from developing the inherent power of creativity to one's own and society's advantage. With feelings of prejudice, hatred and enmity one is not able to look up to the society with love and affection and, consequently, cannot become a useful citizen of that society. One is unable to do any creative work and will only play a negative role. If such persons step into the political arena they will engage in negative politics. Should they venture into the economic and social fields there also they will put obstacles in the process of development. They will become selfish and do everything for their

own sake and desist from spending the resources at their disposal on collective good, so much so that they will try to find excuses for not doing so!

Most nations of the world have failed to make progress in the social and moral fields. If some nations have, however, achieved progress in the fields of science and technology, the fruits of such progress have not reached their societies, or other nations. The reason is none other than the fact that they have not perceived and understood the truth about God and the process of creation initiated by Him, and is not prepared to accept it as part of their life and being.

Another aspect that should be kept in view, in order to charter for us a safe course in life, is that though modern scientific advancement has enriched the world with innumerable comforts but at the same time provided such fatal inventions as can bring about their own death and destruction within few moments. Hence an acute necessity arises that the inhabitants of the world are relieved from fear and terror and given a life where peace, tranquility, love and virtue prevails. Undoubtedly, the world is changing for the better and "better life for all human beings" should be the slogan for progressive political parties of every country.

Let human beings belonging to all nations in the world come together on the basis of one faith and become one people (*ummat-e-wahidah*). This phrase is contained in *surah Al-Ambia* verse 93 and reads: " You are men of the same faith and I am your Cherisher and, therefore, worship me alone." The phrase "*ummat-e-Muslima*" does not appear in the Qur'an as such. It has been derived by the religious elite from *surah Alhajj* verse 78 and *surah Aal-e-Imran* verse 19, and adopted as a conventional meaning, having no real import. The accurate phrase is "*ummat-e-wahidah*". The verse 78 of *surah Al-Hajj* says: "God has approved (for you) your father Abraham's faith. He has named you Muslim before (in previous books) and also in this book (The Qur'an)". The verse 19 of *surah Aal-e-Imran* has it that " The faith in God's estimation is Islam".

It is now time that we seriously consider the proposition that “all those who believe in God and lend themselves to the service of humanity belong to the category of believers (*ahl-e-iman*), and any categorization on the basis of religion should not be countenanced”. Let such people (the believers) exert to create harmony between various religious groups on the basis of higher human values of truthfulness, honesty, justice, observance of covenants, mutual love, shared respect and fraternity, which are common in all Holy Books. Of course, during this process adherents of all religions will be able to exercise their obligations to observe their religious rites and duties according to their understanding. But the purpose behind this exercise should be to acquire the capability and the passion to be of real service to others.

We must, therefore, conclude that all the prophets had brought the same message of faith and did not bring different religions, and that all of them endeavoured to establish peace in this world, taught good and fruitful things and restrained them from bad and harmful actions. They worked for the salvation of humankind and its eternal bliss in the shape of heaven. The heaven has been guaranteed by God to the *momineen* i.e., those who believe in God and serve humanity. This guarantee does not stand necessarily for born Muslims; it stands for all human beings who follow the path shown by God, and establish deep and loving relationship with the Almighty and Merciful God. God thus says, “I have purchased the lives and properties of the faithful in lieu of heaven. They fight (struggle) in the way of God and kill or be killed ) in defence of their faith. This is a firm commitment given in the Torah, The Bible and the Quran, and who could be more observant than God in keeping His promise” (verse 111 of surah *Tauba*).

In these Quranic verses God has explicitly indicated in a plain and manifest manner the way for a human being to steer his life. If, while treading this path, he settles his life affairs in the light of these directions he becomes a useful citizen of society, and can play a fruitful and positive role in resolving the country's social, economic, political and cultural matters. An individual gets rid of many perplexities and practical irritants by acting on the guidance, and can

work with full attention and a loving manner as a good human being, for the well-being of all those with whom he comes into contact, irrespective of creed or religion.

All the prophets right from Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad (Peace be upon him) were prophets of Islam, Islam meaning peace. The existence of various religions, therefore, should give way to faith in One God, and treat all human beings as one people of God with equal rights and privileges. It may take a hundred years, or more, but this is bound to happen and the vested interests will certainly leave the field for good!

# **CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE AND HUMAN RIGHTS SOLIDARITY**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(This paper was presented in a conference held at Bangkok by Christian Council of Asia (CCA) on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1998, and adopted unanimously. Representatives of seven South Asian Countries attended the Conference)*

At least one thing is visibly and indisputably common between human beings, the spirituality of man. This understanding of oneness of spirituality in man can surely lead to the realization of commonness of human interests in human activities.

The underlying spirit of every faith is that it provides an ethical and spiritual motivation to enable the individual to play a constructive role in building the society in a manner as would be beneficial to all those living in it, irrespective of caste, colour or gender. All the prophets had a common message for the whole of humanity, and not for any particular section of the human race. This message relates to the basic issue of human rights, the foremost one being to bring an end to the exploitation of man by man in any form whether economic, social, political, religious or sectarian, and thus move, step by step, towards the creation of a classless society. This goal can be achieved only if we treat all human beings as having equal rights and opportunities, and no discrimination is made between them on the basis of any bias. The biggest hurdles in the way of good human relationship are the biases that are created on account of considerations other than humanitarian. They are created and developed because of narrow thinking, religious intolerance, adherence to old and outmoded customs, hidden fear about supernatural revenge, and the like.

An important aspect of religious practice generally is that we must differentiate between 'faith' and 'religion'. Faith essentially means believing firmly in God—the Creator and Sustainer – and

following His directions in order to make oneself a good human being capable of engaging steadfastly in building the society. In this way confirmation of human rights for all will be available irrespective of caste, colour, creed or gender and man will be rendered free from exploitation and oppression, no matter which religious group he/she is born in. Such an adherence to faith liberates a person from all kinds of prejudices that are a hindrance in developing good human relationship, and averts the division of society into mutually antagonist groups. The betterment of humanity lies in unifying people on the basis of faith, and not segregating them on the basis of religion.

According to democratic principles the people constituting a nation are the deciding factor in matters of thought and action in the social, economic, political or other fields. But the masses have been kept politically unaware and educationally ignorant and illiterate by the vested interests with the help of the elite belonging to the various racial and religious groups. These, in fact, are the elements that usurp the basic rights of the people. Hence the issue of human rights solidarity cannot be deliberated upon separately and in a vacuum. Actually all life activities revolve around human rights, and contribute to their furtherance. So much so that no spiritual advancement can be made by an individual without contributing effectively to securing full human rights for the greatest number.

The concept of 'faith' and 'human rights' go together; they are inseparable. It is the concept of 'religion' that disturbs this natural balance. Faith tends to unite people of various races, colours and cultures for achieving a certain life-purpose. Religion, and the various offshoots of religion in the form of castes, as well as the religious elite formed on the basis of these castes, plays the role of catalysts in enhancing division in the human society. They generate hatred among people on frivolous, trivial and immaterial grounds. Thus the natural human commitment to love and beauty recede in the background.

Christians and Muslims are the two largest communities of the world, and they constitute over 50 per cent of the world population.

If these two communities enter into close coordination in the service of mankind and build up of societies in various countries, and developing the human civilization itself, they can achieve much in the coming twenty-first century. They can help in building sound institutions on a social footing that will contribute to the improvement of governance and development of the social and political structures of various countries. But this work will have to be organized and developed on a long-term basis by initiating a movement for educational and political awareness of the masses with the explicit purpose of establishing democracy and promoting peace.

But, the problem we are faced with is that Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and other creeds have been turned into hereditary religions. The adherents of these religions are Muslims, Christians and Jews etc. by birth, not by acceptance of an ideology. A certain class of religious leaders has cropped up, in all the religions, for performing religious rites, imparting biased religious education, and giving religious sermons. Among the Muslims, the ulema (religious preachers) have also started meddling in politics by forming political parties on religious and sectarian bases, while insisting on their sole right to interpret Islam. This problem can be solved successfully if the well-meaning and emancipated intellectuals from both the Christian and Muslim communities join their heads and hearts together to interpret and follow the common faith.

This is an age of inventions and innovations. The human beings have invented innumerable things for their material needs. It is time they take the necessary strides to construct a philosophy of life for the modern world, in the coming twenty-first century. This will create mutual understanding and trust among the people of various creeds and cultures, and convert the well-meaning slogan of "Liberty – Equality – Fraternity" conceived during the nineteenth century into a reality for all peoples. Such a humanitarian philosophy can only be developed when the human rights issue is rightly comprehended and steps are taken to secure and deliver these to the exploited and oppressed among the people. Allow me to give some hints about this philosophy of life of the twenty-first century. The religious elite, especially among the Christians and the Muslims, must understand

that all the Prophets, without exception, had come forward with a similar philosophy of life that may be called "the way of life of the Prophets" (*Deen-e-Ambia*). Our salvation lies in learning from the way they lived their lives and, on that basis, making ourselves useful to our fellow beings both on the individual and collective basis.

Another point on which I will emphasize is that the question of human rights cannot be dealt with effectively merely by administrative measures or by holding seminars. Its solution is dependent on creating a certain mindset that will make the acquisition of human rights possible and easy. This mindset can be brought into being by accepting, with full vigour and intellectual honesty, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe as our faith. We will also have to agree that the human beings are co-partners of the universe, and a vehicle for the furtherance of the human existence in this world. By accepting faith, one accepts love, appreciation of beauty and creative endeavour as the bases of human existence, and is thus enabled to put in fruitful efforts for the betterment of the society.

Finally I would like to place before you a proposal in the form of a "Code of Human Conduct" that could lead to the formation of the required mindset that will enable us to achieve unity and amity among human beings of all hues on a universal level. This code should be universally affirmed if the desired result is to be achieved. We must affirm that:

\* We will look up to each other as fellow human beings having equal rights.

- We will practice tolerance and co-existence will renounce discrimination on the basis of colour, nationality, race, language, religion, gender or any other kind of bias.
- We will seek and promote knowledge, truth and wisdom and work for building a humane society.
- We will endeavor to raise the level of literacy, educational standards and moral values and engender political awareness in order to promote genuine democratic polity and vibrant culture.

- We will strive to establish an efficient socio-economic system that would prevent exploitation of the masses and improve their standard of living and state of happiness.
- We will reject all kinds of fascism aimed at forcing people to think and act according to the whims and dictates of others and denying them the choice to take their own decisions, and will advocate rational dialogue for settling differences.
- We recognize the need to develop human fraternity, banish wars and secure peace at the global level. The inherent human faculties of creativity, love and pursuance of beauty, and the productive potential of the human race, need to be employed in harmony with nature for the protection of environment.
- We consider consumerism (wasteful expenditure on luxurious living) as harmful for positive progression in human relationship. We seek to live frugally and spend our savings for the betterment of society.

Come, let us exert ourselves to generate within us a “good person”, and create a suitable environment around us that would enable us to spread love, harmony, fraternity and peace, so that a blissful atmosphere could be created in this world of ours to breathe and flourish in. I invite you to gather courage and stand up for being counted as torchbearers of such a creative endeavour.

The following “Action Plan” was also approved unanimously in this Conference for bringing about Christian Muslim amity. This was formulated by the group, formed in the Conference, on the subject of “Human Rights Solidarity”:

1. Visits of solidarity: In times of crisis such as communal or other tensions, riots and disturbances, interfaith groups will visit the disturbed area (homes etc.) to express solidarity, bring peace and solace, even material help when needed.
2. Planned action: Planned action will be taken up in slums of whatever faith as a joint effort of an interfaith group in order to work towards helping the slum dwellers towards internal transformation, and thus put a stop to interventions of vested interests.

3. Advocacy: Collaboration with good political leaders of all parties and assembly members will be done for providing guarantee to uphold human rights so that our point of view may be promoted on a wider level.
4. Concrete steps: Concrete steps will be taken to study the textbooks used in our schools and colleges so that sectarian views may be countered.
5. Values: Values drawn from all religions should be taught to our children from a very early age.
6. Peace movements: Peace movements across the national borders and networking among them should be promoted.
7. Equal rights: All people living in a country should be given equal rights and treated as equal citizens of a nation.

# CODE OF HUMAN CONDUCT FOR UNIVERSAL AFFIRMATION

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(This Code of Conduct was unanimously approved in a conference held in Bangkok by Christian Council of Asia on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1998 wherein seven South-Asian countries were represented)*

- We will look up to each other as fellow human beings having equal rights.
- We will promote pro-existence and will renounce discrimination on the basis of color, nationality, race, language, religion, gender or any other kind of bias.
- We will seek and promote knowledge, truth and wisdom, and work for building a humane society.
- We will endeavor to raise the level of literacy, educational standards and moral values in order to promote genuine democratic polity and vibrant culture.
- We will strive to establish an efficient socio-economic system that would prevent exploitation of the masses, and improve their standard of living and state of happiness.
- We will reject fascism, and all kinds of conduct aimed at forcing people to think and act according to the whims and dictates of others, and will advocate rational dialogue for settling differences.
- We recognize the need to develop human fraternity, banish wars and secure peace at the global level. The inherent human faculties of creativity, love and pursuance of beauty, and the productive potential of the human race need to be employed in harmony with and for the protection of nature and environment.
- We consider consumerism (wasteful expenditure on luxurious living) as harmful for positive progression in human relationships. We seek to live frugally and spend our savings for the betterment of society.

## HUMAN FRATERNITY – NEED OF THE HOUR

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(This treatise was presented at the Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi at a project seminar "Weaving Communities of Hope: Inter-faith Harmony among Grassroots Communities." held on 22-23 April 2006)*

Every individual has a dual relationship with the other; one is human relationship, and the other is the relationship of faith, as majority of the people believe in God and seek His goodwill in their lives. The only difference between the Muslims and Christians, and those belonging to other religions, is that of ways of prayer and religious rite.. Otherwise all have similar needs, equal rights and obligations, and the duties assigned by God to them are the same. If that is true, then why good and fraternal relationship does not exist amongst the different religious groups? Why do they not, while keeping their religious identities intact, work together for mutual benefit and national advancement?

Apparently, there are four reasons for this failure to act positively. The first reason is that leaders of the religious groups do not believe in God the way they should, nor do they have in their practical lives anything to do with human fraternity. Instead of realizing the essence of faith and practicing it truly, they have kept humanity divided into various sect, and have kept it involved merely in the discharge of religious rites and formal prayers. According to their standpoint, salvation can be attained through such practices. For them, any struggle for setting up a political system on the basis of human fraternity and social-economic justice is not necessary. Their only need is to keep their religious authority over the masses intact, and they continue to reap favors and benefits from the rulers and political leaders, while on the other hand, a great majority of the people is afflicted with poverty, starvation, unemployment, fatal diseases and illiteracy. The religious elite are not prepared to take upon itself any responsibility for national development and prosperity. Thus the politicians having vested interests, with the connivance of

the religious elite, succeed in diverting the attention of the masses from their real problems and from effectively participating in the country's political process and the business of the State.

The second reason is that the religious elite have not been able to fully discern the fact that all the prophets were sent by the one Supreme Being, that all of them considered themselves as servants of God and worked for the good of all human beings, that all of them had a similar message of "believing in one God and working for the benefit of all human beings" In other words, while living in a country we should not determine our position as persons belonging to a particular religious group but should dedicate ourselves to working unswervingly for the progress and prosperity of the nation in which we are born, and engage ourselves in social welfare activities. We should work for one another's betterment irrespective of color, race, sect or religion. This is the only way in which we can usefully serve the nation and the humanity at large.

The third reason is that those involved in formation of sectarian or religious groups do not differentiate between the divergent concepts of 'faith' and 'religion'. Faith is a way of life related to the call of various prophets to work for development of the various branches of individual and collective life. Such thinking brings human beings closer to one another and increases cooperation and fraternal relations amongst them. As opposed to this, religions are based on incoherent concepts and were created after the departure of the prophets from this world and, instead of straightening the worldly affairs of the people, they create hurdles in their way.

The fourth reason is that those involved in religious intolerance and sectarianism refuse to accept the truth that the mission of the prophets had essentially been that of "personality building' through which they produced honest and capable national leadership, clean and dynamic societies and progressive states. No clean and fruitful society can be formed without this basic work.

"Faith" is not just any creed but a firm belief in God, His prophets, His books and the Day of Judgment with a new life system.

The concept of faith does not countenance any kind of exploitation of man by man, and requires full association with the oppressed against the oppressor; faith has no meaning without this accomplishment. Persons, who believe that that they are in possession of wealth of faith without siding with the oppressed and helping out the depressed, are captives of self-deception. The path of faith is adorned with sacrifices of one's self-interests, of one's riches and even one's life, which indicates one's love for others and one's preference of the larger collective interest to personal interests,. Such a faith alone enables one to become a {good human being", take keen interest in worldly affairs and play an effective role in building the society.

It should also be kept in full view that a non-believer has every right to maintain and express his/her belief as much a believer has. According to the teachings of the prophets, faith in a certain form cannot be forced upon anyone. Hence we will have to adopt the culture of religious tolerance and make it a necessary part of the law of the land. The slogan of "human fraternity" would turn out to be a deception and a dream if the principles of "unity of humankind", "nationhood", "equal gender rights", "and minority rights" are not adopted honestly and sincerely. Even the right of ruler ship is conditional to its use for the betterment of all those residing in a country irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The moment this condition is violated by those holding the reins of power, the people have every right to replace them without waiting for the completion of their term of office.

Mrs. Annie Besant, a Christian by birth living in India in the nineteenth century, says: " All men of every faith who surrender themselves to God are true children of Islam. It is not the fault of the Prophet if his followers have narrowed it in later days." (It should be remembered that all the prophets were prophets of Islam).

She also says: It is important to note that when we dispute with each other we are guided by human ego rather than divine light and higher purpose. Those who understand and have knowledge will never quarrel on inter-faith differences. They will, on the other hand, live with these differences with proper understanding as human

beings. What is wrong is due to human ego and what is right is due to divine light and higher purpose in life”

At a Regional Consultation held at Bangkok (Thailand) in September 1999 arranged by the Christian Conference of Asia, in which six countries – Hong Kong, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Pakistan – were represented, I presented a “Code of Conduct for Universal Affirmation” which was adopted unanimously. An “Action Plan” (to which I made a major contribution) was also formulated and approved. Both these drafts are re-produced here for consideration of the two-day consultative meeting in Rawalpindi on 22-23 April, 2006.

# THE HUMANIST APPROACH TO INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(Presented at a meeting of the "United Religions Initiative Pakistan" held at Lahore on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2002)*

I have been placing my views regarding inter-religious dialogue for the last seven years at various forums. In all my dissertations I had highlighted the need for unifying humanity on a sound footing, and offsetting attempts by the vested interests to divide it, ideologically as well as socially into innumerable sections on the basis of religions, sects, creeds and nations. These efforts, however, have not gained ground so far.

We, in the twenty-first century, are luckily that we are passing through an era of enlightenment and scientific and technological advancement. Yet we have failed to differentiate between the concepts of "faith" and "religion" and their resultant effects on social development. We have been unable to comprehend the negative effects of "religion" and understand the positive aspects of "faith" in our day-to-day relations. Faith, in fact, unites people of different colours, races, and nations, and lends them clarity and vision about various concepts, while religion divides the people and disarranges concepts. Such an understanding has a direct bearing on bettering our social relations, effecting economic development, and improving governance.

True faith, consists in believing fully, and without reservations, in One God who is Almighty, the Highest Ruler over the worldly rulers, the Creator of the universe and mankind and all other creations, and the Framer of the Laws of Nature that are unchangeable. It consists in obeying His command of serving human beings irrespective of caste, creed, and ethnicity, and building societies on the basis of tolerance, justice, fair play, amity and harmony. We must understand that God is for all peoples, not of the

Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and others separately. Another relevant thing that must be kept in mind, while attending to our worldly affairs, is that God has created man with inbuilt qualities of creativity and productivity, as well as with inherent guidance in the form of conscience, that are required for living a fruitful and successful life. Hence God is part of the human self, and runs in his blood. A man should, therefore, look inwards in himself rather than up to the heavens, while performing his daily tasks and facing the challenges of life.

This concept of "faith", in my view, entails the following obligations upon man: -

1. To do people good to the people, and to build the society on positive lines.
2. To remove illiteracy, and promote education. To emancipate man's consciousness, and secure his release from delusions, superstitions and dogmas.
3. To create political consciousness among the masses, and to engender leadership qualities among them.
4. To develop the concept of "collective leadership" and dispel the ideas of "charismatic leadership" and "life-president ship" in political parties constructed by the vested interests.
5. To secure firmly the representative character of the Parliament by fully safeguarding its members from intrusions by the unelected civil or military bureaucracy in the form of dissolution by them of democratically elected Assemblies of the sovereign people. To get introduced foolproof electoral rules.
6. To prevent the religious elite, the self-appointed interpreters of the word of God, from misguiding the people in the name of Islam, and from interfering, as a class, in the political process and in state management.
7. To work for alleviation of poverty, hunger, backwardness and other imperfections, and to improve the standard of living of the common man. To effect cultural and spiritual development of Pakistani citizens.

Let us, people of all denominations, Christian, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and others work united as faithful servants of God for allaying injustice, oppression, exploitation, terrorism and wars for ushering in progress and prosperity in our countries, and establishing peace and amity globally.

Let us not forget that God's pleasure can only be sought by behaving as a worthy human being engaged in pleasing his fellow-beings, providing them with a safe, pleasant and beautiful haven in this world, and giving them a touch of love, happiness, confidence and comfort. Let it be known that entire adherence to one's religious customs alone, while not discharging the rights of the people, is of no consequence in the eyes of God.

Having said all this, let me also say that there is yet a role for the clergy and the *ulema* to play, provided they change their mindsets by giving due importance to building up a world of happiness, beauty and progress. This they could do by developing the intellectual capabilities of man, and satisfying his material and cultural needs. Thus, these dignitaries would be able to counter man's alienation from society and enable him to enjoy the material, scientific and technological developments accomplished so far by the society, by applying these advancements for the good of humanity.

# ONE GOD - ONE PEOPLE - ONE FAITH

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(Paper presented at Loyala Hall, Lahore at a gathering organized by the YWCA on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2000)*

Ladies and gentlemen! On this auspicious occasion of the coming together of *Ramadan* and Christmas this year, I would like to convey you a message this evening.

God of all peoples, the Almighty, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all the creation, the Law-Giver, the Gracious, the Benevolent and the Loving would naturally expect that the human race would, while making use of the capabilities inherent in it, establish societies in various parts of the world where peace and progress will reign, where justice and fairness will prevail and where one will help the other live in ease.

For this to happen we will have to uphold the principle of "One Lord, One People, One Faith", both individually and collectively. We will have to understand that 'faith in God and service to humanity' is the real message of 'faith' conveyed through the Prophets. It should, therefore, be preferred to 'religion' - a concept developed by men on their own, centered on the different ways of worshiping God, which they say will give them salvation in the hereafter. We should certainly gain inspiration by worshiping God, in whichever way we may, but such worship should propel us to purposeful action in life. The divergent concepts of God-ordained "faith", and the man-tailored "religion", when applied to life give different results; the former unites people whereas the latter divides them. Humankind is thus divided broadly into two components – the believers and the non-believers. The believers continue to work for building a humane, benevolent and productive society while the non-believers busy themselves constantly in putting hurdles in the way of believers and corrupting the society. A struggle to gain mastery thus prevails between the believers and the non-believers. The believers' job is to

proceed with their holy assignment in a tolerant and pleasant way, without thrusting their views on others.

If we concentrate on keeping the purpose of our lives well defined before us, the importance of 'faith' becomes all embracing and other notions take secondary positions. The purpose of life, as understood by a purposeful person, is to build oneself as a knowledgeable, cheerful, cooperating and sharing human being dedicated to a cause, and living a purposeful life. We should never be satisfied with the *status quo* in which we were born and have grown up. We should always be desirous of, and working for, changing the life-system and improving the ways of governance inherited by us, which the vested interests and the monopolists control. We should be constantly engaged in self-development as well as improvement of the society in which we are placed. Man is essentially endowed by nature with the two characteristics of love and creativity. Hence one should be constantly engaged in spreading the message of love and creating new things that are beneficial to humanity.

Now, in order to change the system of governance a sound leadership will have to be established, especially among the youth, that is honest, hardworking, willful and abreast with understanding of the problems faced by the people. Politics, practiced through such a process for bringing forth sound leaders, becomes an 'act of worship'. It ceases to be a 'dirty game'. It is now time that dirty politics be converted into clean politics by strengthening faith in God and reposing confidence and trust in the leadership of men who are above board. The "believers" should now shed their complacency, frustration and cowardice and take on courage to enter the political field for displacing the wrongdoers.

Such an understanding of the concept of life, and the intense desire to contribute usefully for the betterment of humanity, is possible only if all the components constituting a nation, to whichever caste, creed or colour they may belong, are trained in the democratic way and brought into the political mainstream. For this purpose adoption of joint-electoralates as a system of election for the assemblies is necessary. Not only that, it has to be accepted in

principle that even a person belonging to a minority community can become the head of a State, provided he or she is a believer in One God and has the will to serve humanity in an unprejudiced manner.

In this way, the followers of all the Prophets – the Christians, the Muslims and all others professing various creeds - can come together rather than be at loggerheads with one another, destroying each other's lives, properties and environments, and denying them progress and prosperity in this world. The hereafter of every individual too can be made secure, and salvation guaranteed, only by adopting such a "way of life".

# **FACETS OF TOLERANCE-THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(Presented at a meeting of the SNDP in Lahore  
on 29 January 2001)*

Awareness of Human Rights and its dispensation is closely linked with political awareness of the masses and tolerant behaviour of the people in general. The political process, from time to time, positively contributes to changing the system of governance and the social setup. It is an instrument of change contributing effectively towards changing the status quo. It leads to good governance, economic viability and establishment of a fruitful society. But, in order to be effective, this political process should be creative, progressive, principled, clean and founded on dedication for the cause on the part of political leaders and government servants, with its precincts explicitly laid down.

The various areas in which toleration should be exercised with the purpose of creating cooperative and progressive societies are race, language, color, religion, caste, creed and general behaviour. Cultivation of toleration in its various forms is essential for establishing a democratic, cultured and equitable society.

Prejudices such as ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, sectarian, and sectional contribute heavily towards violation of human rights. Another aspect that negates the importance of human rights, and its compliance, is giving preference to personal interests as against the collective interest.

Human rights violations are made at two levels - the public level and the government level. Unless we effectively curb these at the public level it becomes difficult to curb it at the government and state levels. Therefore, a mass literacy and education movement and a sound programme will have to be initiated for this purpose.

Adherence to the observation of Human Rights dispensation enables a group of people, or a nation, to develop into a democratic, pluralistic and peaceful society and establish a welfare state. On the one hand, it prevents gross violation of human rights both by state machinery and social structures and, on the other hand, it grants equal opportunities to every citizen to realize his/her full potential as an equal and dignified member of the human society. It safeguards every citizen from all kinds of exploitation by the vested interests. These vested interests, in our case, are the *jagirdars*, the monopoly capitalists and industrialists, and the religious elite.

The bestowal of human rights requires that the following rights be guaranteed to every individual: -

1. The right to a safe life, free from undue financial stress.
2. Full protection of the law for dispensing liberty and dignity of the person.
3. Equal opportunities to utilize the natural resources of one's country and a substantial level of living standard, without any discrimination on the basis of colour, caste, creed, gender, ethnic or cultural identity, language and social status.
4. Devolution of political, administrative and economic power to democratically and freely elected bodies of the people at the lower levels.
5. Special representation to women, religious minorities, workers, peasants and other disadvantaged groups in elected bodies, at all levels, to ensure earliest attainment of equality among people.
6. Equality of every person before the law, and equal protection of law.
7. Permission to peacefully assemble and associate without interference, and to travel to any part of the country.
8. Freedom of thought and conscience, and the right to express one's opinion freely.
9. Protection against all forms of hate-speech and false propaganda by an individual, group or state organ.
10. Sharing, acquiring and imparting information and ideas through any media without interference from the state.

11. Rendering every assistance to develop the productive and creative potentials and activities of an individual.
12. Providing social security in case of unemployment, sickness, disability, old age or natural disaster.
13. Special legislative and administrative measures for the economic and social uplift of disadvantaged groups, communities, and regions.
14. Freedom to adhere to any religion or belief and to practise it in public or in private.
15. Equal status, rights and opportunities regardless of one's religion and belief, and protection against the linking of political, legal, economic and social entitlements with one's religious identity.
16. Non-interference of the State in religious affairs, and in formulation of religious dogmas.
17. Abolishing all laws and customary practices manifesting gender discrimination, through appropriate legislative measures. Helping women attain equal status and opportunities in every domain of State and society. Giving them constitutional guarantees of their access to the political and electoral structure.
18. Entitling every child to total protection from all forms of violence, forced labour, neglect, abuse and coercion. Giving the child the right to free choice of profession and opinion formation.
19. Preservation and promotion by the State of regional cultures, languages, arts and literature. Promotion of commonalities among various cultural entities to facilitate evolution of a pluralistic culture.
20. Ensuring compulsory and free education to all citizens up to the secondary level, providing them access to higher professional and technical education and promoting education in liberal arts and sciences to develop a humane polity.
21. Providing just working conditions, and giving equal remuneration for equal work.
22. Placing restrictions, in the best interest of the people, on monopolies and socially unacceptable ownership of land and

natural resources, which are the collective properties of the people living in the country.

23. Guaranteeing rest, leisure and recreation to all segments of society, and providing a clean environment.
24. Fixing an affirmative role for the State to promote international peace and well being of humanity.

# THE CONCEPT OF JEHAD IN ISLAM

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(Presented at Pakistan Naval War College in Lahore  
on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1998)*

Prior to giving my views on the concept of *Jihad* in Islam, I would like to dwell briefly on certain premises of which a clear understanding is necessary. These are:

A clear understanding of the philosophy of life i.e. purpose of creation of the universe and of man by God. Unless we grasp these two aspects of our life we will not be able to understand the meaning of *Jihad* and Islam. This purpose is given in the Quran in the following *surahs*/verses:

surah 7— verses 54 to 55. surah 21 verses 16-19, surah 21 verses 30-33, surah 29 verse 44, surah 30 verses 7-8, surah 36 verses 81-83, surah 41 verses 9-12, surah 51 verses 47-51, surah 55 verses 1-8, and surah 45 verse 13

1. According to the Quran the universe was created in six phases (periods) while each phase is of one thousand years. The whole universe, right from the earth to the skies above, constitutes a complete system that is working under strict laws of Nature. This universe is based on reality and not on superstitions and imaginations. Only that will meet with success here and secure roots in the soil, which conforms to realities and facts. Man has progressed and constructed all things only after discovering the laws working behind all things in the world. All the forces of nature have been subdued by God and delivered for the service of man.
2. As regards the purpose behind the creation of man, God says in the Quran "We have not created the universe and the earth without a purpose" (*surah 27* verse 16). It is evident from the whole divine scheme of the creation that the universe has been created to assist man in rising continuously from the depth of ignorance to the heights of learning and excellence which has

been destined for him (of course as a result of his own efforts). This process, however, is subject to the universal law of struggle between the true and untrue. This world is a seriously constituted and established system in which no evil can thrive, and must finally die away. The human being has been endowed with two basic qualities: those of love and creativity. It is on account of these qualities that through collective efforts man will succeed eventually in bringing about an exemplary society having a sound socio-economic structure that will enable human being to raise their standard of living and understanding and ensure prosperity and intellectual fulfillment for all human beings.

3. We must also understand before we go any further that human life is a continuing struggle (*jihad*) amidst two segments of human society: one, the oppressed and two, the oppressor. The nature of oppression may vary with the various tiers and levels of society but the class struggle will remain the main factor, which upsets the equilibrium of human existence and hinders human progress and prosperity.
4. Another thing to be understood well is that the removal of the disparity and injustice between people has been the main responsibility given to the Prophets to discharge. All the Prophets played similar roles. They brought the human being out of the darkness of ignorance of the former ages, and prepared them for the coming ages by equipping them with relatively modern thoughts and behaviours. They relieved them of racial, religious and other prejudices and the spell of outdated and harmful customs and traditions that hamper the fostering of fraternal relationship and mutual co-operation. Retrogressive thoughts are a hurdle in the way of learning and understanding of the purpose of life, and derail efforts of well-meaning and talented people for making innovations and inventions in order to create better living conditions for the human society.
5. Another factor that needs to be remembered is that God will not descend Himself upon the earth to fulfill the objectives of His creation – the Universe and Man. These will be achieved by His best creation—man and his counterpart woman—in whom He has endowed with all the necessary qualities to make their worldly

abode an abode of peace and plenty. Thus the Will of God will be fulfilled and his undeniable greatness proved beyond any ambiguity. It is the willful and sustained efforts of man (God's creation) that will bring this to happen.

6. It should also be understood that the main function of a human being is to be friendly and cheerful, to be helpful and fruitful to others, and to individually and collectively prepare for "*Jihad*" against the individual oppressors as well as the oppressive system, which has been constructed by the vested interests over the centuries. They are in the habit of usurping the rights and privileges of their fellow beings and subjecting them to insults and injuries, both economic and social. Such bad elements are able to have their own way because they do not face any organized resistance from the so-called noble, high born, gentle and pious persons of the middle and upper- middle classes of our society and the religious elite. These elements are in fact collaborators in the foul game of usurpation of the rights of the people.

Now, to come to the subject of today's discourse "Concept of Jihad in Islam", it cannot be honestly and truthfully dealt with, and justice cannot be done to it, unless we bring out the true meanings of the two basic words often used of "Islam" and "*Jihad*", and dwell deep into their import.

Islam: The word "Islam" was first used by God when he asked Prophet Abraham to accept Islam as his "*deen*" (*surah* 2 verse 131) as a way of life i.e. to submit to Him alone and to no one else, and to reject all false deities invented by the vested interests among men. The meaning of Islam was perfected during the prophet hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a way of life for the human beings (*surah* 5 verse 3). All the Prophets named in the Quran, and even those who have not been named therein, were Prophets of Islam. The authenticity of the word is contained in the Quran. God says: "This (Quran) is exhortation and counseling for all human beings" (*surah* 12 verse 104) . Quran is a guidance and a blessing for those who believe" (*surah* 10 verse 58). Thus Islam has no other meaning than that given in the Quran. Islam is not a straightjacket of "*zabta-e-hayat*" ( a strictly regulated code of life); it is "a way of life", a state of mind that makes a man either productive or

unproductive, progressive or retrogressive, co-operative or non-co-operative, compassionate or aggressive. The two basic declarations one has to make to become a Muslim are: one, to affirm the oneness of God as the Creator, Sovereign and Sustainer of the universe and what it contains, and to remember Him often, and two, to perform good deeds in the service of other human beings.

There is no place in Islam for religious elitism, or for a class of Ulema feeding on sectarianism. One may have a variety of opinion about various matters, because every person has an inherent right to interpret the Quran for himself / herself as they are answerable to God for their thoughts and deeds that impinge upon the interests of the society and the state.

Jihad: The word "*Jihad*" in its overall concept means hard and sustained struggle in one's lifetime, both individually and collectively, against injustice and exploitation, oppression and suppression, illiteracy and ignorance, economic strangulation and monopoly over the means of production, perpetrated by man on man. Jihad, in relation to the security of a country against foreign aggression, would mean taking up arms for personal or national defence. A soldier, who risks his life for the defence of a progressive and just society, is indeed engaged in a *jihad*, and one who offers his life in defence of such a fruitful social structure in the time of dire need is rightly called a martyr, and remembered as a notable and exalted person. The word "*jihad*" does not apply to waging a direct or proxy war on behalf of in order to secure the vested interests and the imperialist countries in the name of Islam. Fighting wars for others' interests and calling it a *jihad* is a false concept. A war indulged in to safeguard the existence of a rotten system cannot by any stretch of imagination be called *jihad*. *Jihad* is not a war of aggression. A case in point is the Afghan war (named as "Afghan Jihad" by the vested interests) which was fought to secure American interests in Afghanistan as against those of the Soviet Union. It is height of hypocrisy, and misuse of a religious connotation, to call it a *jihad*.

Keeping in view the above definition of "Islam" and "*Jihad*", and considering the purpose of *jihad* as defined by the Quranic verses, a new and fresh meaning of Islam and *jihad* has surfaced as against the prevailing traditional meanings. In this situation I will

propose that we start an educational process by which we may come out of the mental grooves we have created for ourselves by defective thinking and weak actions in life by just listening to others and not thinking by ourselves. Let us now apply our intellect and start thinking, on our own, on positive and analytical lines that would go to improve our personalities and our life-style. Let us open up our minds and have a broader view of things around us. Let us formulate our views in such words as could be understood equally well by all human beings Let us concentrate on fulfilling 'Haqooq –ul-Ibad' and make Islam to mean, as it originally is, giving equal rights to all human beings, especially the downtrodden irrespective of castes, creed or gender. Let Islam mean promoting peace and human fraternity, establishing true democracy, banishing hunger and poverty, removing injustice and exploitation, destroying the vested interests, promoting love, beauty and creativity in all spheres of life and, through such endeavour, develop a vibrant culture and a responsive and humane civilization worthy of conscientious human beings.

Finally, I will respond briefly to the three scopes of the subject under study:

1. The difference between Jihad and War:

The prerequisites for designating a war as "*jihad*" are:

- (a) The participants in a *jihad* should be satisfied that they are fighting in the way of God, that they join in this *jihad* along with their financial resources with a will to die for a cause and be prepared, when hard-pressed, to migrate to other lands, and give sacrifices in His way. Jihad presumes a total effort on the part of a *mujahid*.(references taken from Quran *surah* 9 verses 19-23)
- (b) The society should be free from any compulsions imposed by the governments, the religious elite, and those said to be imposed by the "*faqih*s" (theologians). Jihad entails a persistent struggle to create, and to secure, a society based on the principles enunciated in the Quran.

(c) One's fathers, sons, brothers, wives and other relatives should not be dearer to the *mujahids* than *jihad* in the way of God and His Prophet. (*surah 9* verse 23).

Concept of war as propounded by Quran and Sunnah:

The concept of war as given in the Quran has been circumscribed in explicit words:

- (a) War can be waged only in the way of God, not for national aggrandizement or for personal glorification.
- (b) During a war no excesses are to be committed.
- (c) Once you become engaged in a war in God's path you should conclude it successfully in such a way that persecution of the revolutionaries (who are struggling for establishing a better social system of life) by a government of the vested interests is obliterated, and the instructions and laws of God come to be followed fully. In other words the aggressive role of man over man ceases. This is the most important responsibility of a Muslim.

The command thus given is that firstly, war must not be initiated; secondly, no excesses should be committed and requirements of war should not be exceeded; and thirdly, human lives should not be taken unnecessarily. The Quran does not allow a war wherein these three conditions are not fulfilled. Aggressive wars carried out in Iraq and Bosnia, and now being engaged in Kosovo (Yugoslavia), are not allowed in Islam. (References taken from *surah 2* verses 190-193).

- d) When a just social order in a country is sought to be replaced by an unjust order by any group or nation through aggression, it should be resisted with all the might at the disposal of a nation.

Thus only a defensive war fought, while remaining within the precincts prescribed by the Quran, comes under the definition of "*Jihad*".

3. Validity/applicability of concept of Jihad in the present-day world:

Wars, it seems, have become a necessary evil, in the modern world, and will continue to hold its sway till such time as capitalist imperialism remains a dominant force. But the true concept of *jihad*, as I have tried to explain, does not allow the present day wars at all, which are based on aggression and necessitate extermination of millions of human beings for no valid purpose.

The only validity of "*Jihad*" for us in the present day world is that we, the people of Pakistan (the civilians and their brethren the army men) should exert together to become instrumental in setting up a just socio-economic order in Pakistan. While doing so, we should be fully prepared to face and defeat any aggression by unjust regimes and imperialist powers to put obstacles in the way of creating a just and responsive society. This joint effort by the civilians and the army has to be affected as a perpetual *jihad* with full alertness on the part of every member of the nation, be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim. For that we will have to form ourselves into a strong nation with a just and progressive social order, joined together in strong bonds of friendship and co-operation irrespective of caste, race and religion, and, of course, wedded to the ideology of Islam (a universal concept for humanity) not for born Muslims alone but for all peoples. This ideology has been put forth by all the Prophets, and finally propounded in the most authentic way by the Quran and presented through Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), for all times to come. This message of the Quran and Sunnah in the form of "Jihad" and "Islam" is for all peoples and all nations of the world.

Let it be understood well that Islam bases Jihad on peace alone, and that ushering in peace and plenty in this world, through the strivings (*jihad*) by man, is the ultimate destiny of mankind!

## **BUILDING QAID-E-AZAM'S PAKISTAN THROUGH THE POPULAR WILL**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(Presented at the seminar arranged by the Society for  
Citizen's Rights at Best Western Hotel, Islamabad on 31<sup>st</sup>  
July, 2000)*

I am sure every one has gathered here with conscious minds and throbbing hearts to contribute and exchange their well-considered thoughts on how best to serve their country by extracting it from the quagmire of bad politics, and putting it on the right track of good governance. This is the common concern of both the intellectuals and the ordinary citizens.

I will begin my treatise by stressing that we should not ignore the fact that we owe the very existence of Pakistan to the dedicated efforts and the exemplary leadership of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Others, who have followed him, with few exceptions, have done disservice, to a smaller or larger extent, to the cause of Pakistan. We will have to pass this judgment without fear if we intend to reverse this tide and in future contribute positively, as a nation, to build the country. Now, instead of grieving over the happenings in the past we should give our utmost thought and attention to what the father of the nation wished Pakistan to be. We should seek guidance from the advice I am sure every one has gathered here with conscious minds and throbbing hearts to contribute and exchange their well considered thoughts on how best to serve their country by extricating it from the quagmire of bad politics, and putting it on the right track of good governance. This is the common concern of both the intellectuals and the ordinary citizens. I will try, as best as I can, to lay before you the bases of future Pakistan. I will be very frank and forthright in my presentation. It is for you to judge its correctness and directions of Jinnah, left with us as his legacy, and agree to set our political, moral and cultural direction according to his wishes.

But before we do that, you would agree that most of our political leaders after Jinnah were not intellectually, educationally and morally of the desired capability. The concepts and politics advocated and practiced by these political leaders were rotten to the core. These self-styled leaders had saddled themselves in the seat of power through dubious means. These leaders, mostly feudal and capitalists, had installed themselves in positions of power by hook or by crook, and indulged intensively in promoting their own interests to the detriment of the nation. Their misdeeds brought about poverty, unemployment and a hoard of other disparities in the social, economic, political and cultural fields.

Therefore, after all the frightful experiences that we have had at the hands of our leaders, of betrayal of promises and plunder of national wealth, we will have to finally adopt a new political philosophy and a down- to- earth plan of action based on principles, if we wish to build Pakistan. Now, we shall have to speak out and present the truth, and nothing but the truth.

The salient feature of this political philosophy shall be:

- (a) The ownership of all land and means of production will belong collectively to the nation, which includes all citizens of Pakistan irrespective of caste, colour, race or religion. All citizens will be provided equal opportunities for its utilization according to their capabilities.
- (b) All the citizens of Pakistan will have equal rights. No distinction whatsoever will be made on considerations of gender, race or religion.
- (c) Political leadership will, in future, be thrown upwards from the grassroots from amongst the educated, talented and honest people of the lower and middle classes, and not from the vested interests and exploitative elements of the upper class.
- (d) Duality in our socio-political and judicial systems will be done away with. The duality inherent in the terms 'secular approach' and 'religious approach' will be removed.

The plan of action for national construction shall contain the following steps: -

(1) The 1973 Constitution will be restored in its original form. All amendments made by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and Mian Nawaz Sharif will be scrapped because their dictatorial governments had made all those changes in the interest of the vested classes and thereby undermined the real interests of the people. The truly democratic government, when it is put in place by 2002, after the necessary land reforms have been effected and electoral reforms made, will indeed have the right to make the necessary changes in the Constitution through Parliament in the interest of the nation.

(2) Elections will be held on joint electorate system as laid down in the 1973 Constitution.

(3) All the political leaders, civil bureaucrats and army generals who had indulged in corruption and dishonesty, during the last decade at least, will be subjected to strict accountability. All those found guilty will, in addition to penalties and imprisonment, be debarred from any public office for at least two decades.

(4) Persons belonging to the army, civil bureaucracy or the judiciary (which are auxiliary organizations of the government) will not be allowed to take part in politics, much less take over the administration of the state. Such persons, however, may be allowed to take part in politics after two years of their retirement from service, and fulfillment of the requirements of honest and clean politics.

(5) The politics of intrigue and confrontation will be totally scrapped and politics of dialogue, consultation and consensus adopted instead as a national policy.

(6) *Jagirdari* and *sardari* system will be totally abolished, and absentee landlordism banned. Through a process of land reforms, excess lands of over 50 acres per family will be taken over by the state without compensation, and a minimum of 8 acres will be given to the landless tenants on easy terms. This will result in immense increase in agricultural production and will raise the standard of living of the rural population (which is 70 % of the total population) to a great extent. It will give a tremendous boost to the country's economy as well.

(7) The construction of palatial houses will be banned. The maximum area fixed for houses will be one kanal. Owners of residential properties and commercial plazas valuing over one crore

will be subjected to wealth tax on reasonable rates. Those who leave behind huge properties and massive wealth will be subjected to Death Duty. Such a step will serve as an incentive to spend excess wealth on collective interest in their lifetime rather than leave it behind for their racist offspring.

(8) Greatest attention in future will be given to democratically organized political parties. The future of politics will hinge on their being propellers of the political process, creators of political awareness in the masses, and monitors of the working of assemblies and elected party governments. Political parties claiming an all-Pakistan status will have branches in all the four Provinces and in majority of the districts in the provinces. Political parties that fail to secure at least 5 per cent of polled votes in the first round (in the new system of elections) will not be allowed to contest the final round.

(9) Radical electoral reforms are a must if a truly democratic form of government is to be introduced in Pakistan. An easily understood, reasonable, and feasible criteria for selection of candidates and for permitting political parties' participation in elections, will be made. Emphasis will also be laid on elections being least costly and transparently fair

(10) Women's full participation in the affairs of the state and other gainful activities will be ensured, and all social and cultural impediments in its way removed.

Finally, a piece of advice for the politicians who are still masquerading as champions of democracy, and are getting a lot of undue publicity in the press. They have had enough of say in government for the last half-century but have failed miserably; they have spread enormous ideological and intellectual confusion; they have damaged the country's economy and social setup to an immeasurable extent. Therefore, they stand entirely exposed before the people. If they do not acknowledge these facts about their incompetence and dishonesty willingly, they would learn a hard lesson through the coming elections. They should admit their failure to serve the nation and quit the political arena on their own. Let them gracefully give way to clean, honest, dedicated, capable and open-minded leadership. New political parties, un-tinted by trickery,

deceit and corruption must now enter the political field to win over the electorate by creating confidence in them, and take the reins of government in their hands. There is no dearth of educated and talented men and women in the society and, in spite of the frustrations and complexities created during the last fifty years by the political and military dictators alike, the majority of Pakistanis being good people. The press must also support and promote the new public spirited political leaders in the national interest, and stop projecting bad politicians that have vested interests of their own.

The need for an upsurge of political activity on truly democratic lines, and the raising of the level of political awareness among the masses, is now looming large. Good people in the society should now come forward and form new political parties or join the existing ones of their choice, take the political process in their own hands, eject the bad elements from the body politic and move on towards establishing a fraternal, just, humane and egalitarian society in Pakistan. Such a society can certainly be developed in the light of the principles of "universal" Islam as embodied in the Holy Quran and provided by all the Prophets, and also propounded by the great philosophers and spiritual leaders. According to these principles, all humans, irrespective of race, religion or genders are treated equally and un-basely, and hence there is no place for religious elitism and their cult of religious intolerance and sectarianism. We will be able to give true shape to Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's dream about his Pakistan if we give up the negative cults and build our future on positive values and creative endeavours.

# **ECONOMIC SITUATION OF PAKISTAN AND FORTHCOMING BUDGET**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

*(Presented in a budget seminar arranged by the "Young Thinkers' Forum" at the Auditorium of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on May 31, 2005)*

## **Prevailing Economic Situation:**

The economic situation in Pakistan is desolate and disheartening, but the government is bent upon painting a rosy picture of the country's economy. It is harping upon the tune of macro development and permanent reserves, which is mostly due to rescheduling of loans and remittances from Pakistanis living abroad, and may be the 9/11 incident in U.S.. The concept of economy that rules economic development in Pakistan is market-control of prices which, by and large, is in the hands of business tycoons made out of monopolization and mismanagement of natural resources and public money.

The pro-people concept of economy is based on micro development, the benefits of which go directly to the people, and the business and industrial elite do not benefit at the cost of the poor people. Economic policy should serve the greatest interests of the largest number of people by meeting the basic needs of the people i.e., food, housing, basic services of electricity, water and gas, health and education. To achieve this objective, a 'self-sustained' and 'debt-free' economy should be provided to the nation. The norm of a civilized society is that the labour of a few should benefit the many instead of the labour of the many benefiting the few.

Re-scheduling of debts, and securing of still more foreign debts, is no solution to economic degradation. By resorting to these the government is burdening the country's economy dangerously. It has

pushed the country deeper into the quagmire of loans. It has, in fact, led to lessening of the country's wealth.

The government has failed to harness the ample natural resources and manpower of the country because it has defaulted in raising the standard of living of the poor people and workers and improving their technical skills, which are essential ingredients for economic development. Thus the development in the industrial and agricultural sectors has been badly hit. The Bureaucracy is the worst hindrance in industrial development while production in the agricultural sector cannot be achieved as long as feudalism exists in the country. The government has also failed to reduce the wide gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor. The ratio between the lower and upper income groups, that should not be more than 1:10 in an Ideological state, is presently more than 1:1000.

Restructuring and stabilizing of the economy are, therefore, essentially required. Confidence in the economic and financial system needs to be promoted with a view to generate savings. Presently the importance of the concept of savings is not realized, and nothing is being done at the government and societal levels to enable people to resort to savings. On the other hand, General Sales Tax (GTS) has been applied on basic food items and medicines and recently it has been decided to apply it on electricity consumption. Its application on pesticides and fertilizers is also being contemplated. All this will bring enormous hardship to the low-income group.

The vast financial needs of the Center and its sorely limited revenues, because of the slow moving economy and pervasive tax evasion, go to hinder economic growth. Under the new fiscal order the district governments may come up with their own taxes, while the provincial governments will try to increase their revenue, and the Center not giving up some of its own taxes. The cumulative taxation thus may be too heavy and ultimately become counter-productive for all. The total number of central, provincial and local taxes is 101. As long as taxes are high and varied, there will be evasion and the tax officers and the taxpayers will share the rewards of large-scale evasion. Our corporate tax of 35 per cent needs to be reduced to 25 per cent if

investment is to be promoted and industrialization accelerated. Federal excise should normally be a provincial tax. The sales tax is a provincial subject but in Pakistan it is federally collected. It is the largest single source of revenue in the country, but only one-third of the total GTS goes to the provinces, which have too many responsibilities and they affect the people directly. Some of the federal taxes should, therefore, be transferred to the provinces for direct collection.

The problem of federal and provincial governments of Pakistan is not only inadequacy of revenues but also their inefficient and non-productive utilization. Another heavy expenditure is now being incurred in the form of heavy emoluments to the white-collar specialists and advisors taken on contract, and provision of cars worth millions of rupees to the Speaker of the National Assembly and other big shots.

The enormous defense expenditure, at the cost of health and education of the people and development needs of the country, must be reduced substantially in the national interest. The arranged confrontation between Pakistan and India by the governments of the two countries must be ended through the pressure of the people of the two countries. The defense sector should also come under the purview of Parliament as in other democratic countries. The financial management in the military sector should be open to analysis by the Standing Committee of the parliament. The public figures should be free to look into the military administration and its large spending with the purpose of stabilizing the economic system and avoiding any chaos in it.

Development projects are announced for public consumption more in line with monarchical pattern than a democratic order, without getting them cleared by the Planning Commission. As a result the country has been having large budget deficits as high as 10 per cent as its peak. The more we succeed in reducing the budgetary deficit the more Pakistanis go below the poverty line. The rate of unemployment is directly linked to the economic activity in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, which is slowing down.

Government policies have led to immense increase in poverty, unemployment and commodity prices, thus leading to great hardships for the people.

When it becomes difficult to maintain regular payment of installments to foreign creditors, the IMF compels people through the government to part with their assets and basic necessities of life by taking such steps as privatizing the PTCL and OGDCL and downsizing etc. thus creating unemployment on a large scale. Unfortunately the government too is keen to give away their assets in foreign possession by privatizing them, even at the cost of putting their people into great stress. The foreign interests are being provided with an opportunity to loot the country's assets. The provincial governments have also been authorized by the Center to seek loans from the World Bank directly. This will lead to further burdening of the country's economy. This policy will amount to weakening the economic base of the country and to completely mortgaging the country's assets with the Western countries and the United States.

One way to measure the level of operation of democratic values in any society, nation or country is to see how much importance it attaches to its institutions of accountability. It must be remembered that after a lapse of fifty years our legislators have not given us an Audit Act.

### **Forthcoming Budget:**

Having placed before you the plight of the prevailing economic situation of the country, I now venture to give my proposals for the forthcoming budget 2005-2006.

The budget should be "production oriented" rather than "revenue oriented". Multiple taxes on trade and industry should be discontinued to encourage advancement in trade and industry. Industry and trade should be provided hurdle-free opportunities to develop their respective fields. Bureaucracy should be restrained from laying down delaying procedures in this respect.

Small traders should be provided opportunities to deposit their income tax on *ad hoc* basis, increasing it yearly as their business flourishes, on their own free will. They should also be exempted from maintaining regular accounts and auditing. Such a system of taxation will result in substantial increase in revenue without it being manipulated by the tax collecting staff to the loss of the treasury.

The practice of engaging white-collar consultants on contract basis against heavy emoluments should be discontinued. Reliance should be placed on permanently staffed technocrats in government service, with good reputation in skill, and they should be looked after well.

“Indirect taxes” should be reduced and “direct taxes” increased so as to decrease the burden on the poor and increase collection from the rich who can very well afford it. Sales tax should not be imposed on items of bare necessities of life, and on electricity, pesticides and fertilizers. Property tax rate should be reduced from 25 per cent to 15 per cent. A thorough survey of residential and commercial properties should be made to increase income on this account. Agricultural Tax should not be imposed on holdings up to 12 ½ acres.

Effective land reforms should be made by abolishing the *jagirdari* system altogether. A ceiling of 100 acres of irrigated land and 200 acres of non-irrigated land should be fixed. The excess fallow lands and government lands should be given to landless tenants.

Residential plots of more than one kanal should be disallowed for building residential houses. All large plots measuring more than 4 kanals attached to the bungalows of civil and military officers should be separated from their physical possession.

Expenditure on running the civil administration should be reduced by at least 20 per cent. The unnecessary perks of government servants should be done away with, and their basic salaries increased reasonably instead.

No further foreign loans should be taken, and the outstanding loans reduced by a minimum of 10 per cent per year. All development

expenditure should be generated internally. The expenditure on debt servicing should be reduced by 50 per cent.

Expenditure on defense should be reduced by a minimum of 25 per cent. Expenditure on subsidies should be reduced by 25 per cent. Expenditure on public sector development programmes should be increased by 25 per cent. Expenditure on education and health facilities should also be increased by 25 per cent.

# **RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC HISTORY**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**

I will commence by saying that Islamic history, in a short perspective, is the history of achievements of last of the prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his best companions Abu-Bakr Siddiq, Umar, Ali and Usman (*razi-allah-taala-anho*). Islamic history, I dare say, ended with the passing away of Hazrat Usman the fourth caliph.

The Islamic system that is based on mutual consultation, social justice and economic parity gave peace, tolerance and plenty to the human society. It was set aside by monarchies of the Muslims who, unfortunately, were descendants of the faithful. Sound foundations of 'faith' and socio-economic system based on it, however, led to research and advancement in various fields of learning in the countries that came under Muslim rule of the faithful. Both the socialist and the capitalist systems that followed the Islamic system gained a lot from the research by the Muslims.

The dominance in the modern world of the capitalist system developed by the US and the West, and its absolute control over the electronic media, has spread ideological confusion amongst the people of the world and created enormous hindrances in the way of revival of the concept of 'faith' as against 'religion'. However, many attempts have been made throughout history, and will continue to be made in the future, to revive the Islamic faith i.e., the Islamic way of life.

The concept of 'religion', as developed and spread by the capitalist and socialist systems, is the most serious impediment in the way of the realization and acceptance of the truth about human existence. The leaders of the two modern systems of capitalism and socialism have coined the word 'religion' for political purposes, i.e., to enable them to rule unhindered over the people, whom the ruling elite

consider inferior to them, and would like to exploit for their selfish ends. This concept of religion thus places the real power and authority in the hands of the few while preventing the majority of the people from managing the society in the wider interests of the people. Through such a narrow and false concept of religion, the interests of the people are maliciously diverted towards useless attempts by them to secure false satisfaction of achieving salvation in the hereafter, without having to exert for the dominance of 'good' over 'evil' in worldly affairs, and making efforts in this world to order their lives for living in peace, progress and plenty. The concept of religion has been restricted to a few acts of worship of a God whose place in bettering the performance of world affairs is not really understood, and who is not considered to be connected in any way with one's daily life. The term 'religion' is, in fact, a misnomer and should not be used to mean the 'Faith of the Prophets'. It should be discarded altogether in order to avoid confusion in the minds of the people, and those who manage the State.

The concept of "religious tolerance" had in fact originated in the Islamic history under a different connotation from the present one. It was first mentioned in the Holy Quran in verse 5 of *Surah "Al-kafiroon"* in the words: "You are free to follow your faith and leave us to freely follow our faith". This was a clear direction from the Creator to build one's social relationship on toleration of the differences in thought and action of the people living in a society, which include differences in the ways of worship of God.

It would be pertinent to mention here that religions (i.e., religious or sectarian concepts) are man-tailored, while faith is the way of life revealed by God for man through His Prophets) for man. Religions have a tendency towards their being further divided into various sects and creeds. They go to divide people into innumerable dissident groups who disable the people from working together for a common cause.

'Faith', on the other hand, unites people of different ethnic, linguistic and religious origins for a common humanitarian cause and promotes human wellbeing irrespective of race, colour or creed.

Religious dogmas are the source of intolerance, and breed a false concept of "*jihad*" that leads to terrorism. This disassociates one from taking up the responsibility of ordering affairs of the society and the state for betterment of human beings. Most of the evils prevailing in today's world which is dominated by imperialist powers, are due to the ideological misconceptions that at present sway the mind and intellect of the world leaders as well as political leaders of various countries.

'Islam' is the name given by the Quran to the "deen-e-Zambia" i.e., the way of life of the Prophets before Muhammad, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Its role lies in its etymological meanings of peace, tranquility, tolerance and amity. Hence the term Islam is best understood if it is used in this context. The Quran says in verse 19 of *Surah Aal-e-Imran*: "**Really, the deen – the way of life – you have been assigned is Islam**". Men of faith (Muslims in the real sense), therefore, emit peace and amity through their dealings with others. This definition of Islam, given by the Quran, would lead one to understand that all persons who come to believe in God and serves humanity', belong to the category of *ahl-e-iman* even though they may be from the *ahl-e-kufr* by birth. Essentially, humanity is composed of two transposable categories of the 'faithful' and 'those who negate', and eventually it must return to its origin, which the Quran says in verse 4 of surah "*Atteen*" is: "**Surely, I have created the human being in excellent disposition**".

An important aspect of religious tolerance is that the future generations must be educated on a firm ideological footing and not chained any longer to false and idealistic notions that do not stand the test of rational and scientific inquiry. Such education should be action-oriented and not restricted to mere talk.

The touchstone for judging the correctness and usefulness of any notion is that it is practicable and serves the interests and basic needs of the common man, and does not promote intolerance, prejudices and superstitions in human society. For this to come about, we will have to pronounce in clear terms that no person shall be subjected to dominance of any kind by another person, be he a ruler, a leader, a religious elite or even a family head. A person

should have absolute freedom to form an opinion or make decisions on his own. One should be enabled to seek guidance freely, without any extraneous pressure, from those one respects and trusts. The best guidance, however, is from God who is the *bestower* of life and sustenance to man. Guidance can be had from him directly by any person just by asking for it. No support is required from anyone else to seek guidance from God. One should not follow blindly any human being. Anyone demanding abject submission should be held to be an imposter and a fascist deserving full defiance.

# UNITARIAN POLITICS

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(Presented at the National Political Conference held in Lahore on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2001)*

There are two main players of the body politic, and makers of a country's destiny:

One, the political leaders (i.e. representatives of the people, who possess the valid authority to govern a country). The basic principle that governs the authority of the politicians is that they are democratically elected representatives of the people. Two, the civil servants assist the politicians in governing the country. They are servants of the people who are there to act according to the explicitly laid down policies and programmes that are framed through consultations and discussions by the people's representatives in Parliament.

All other State institutions such as the Judiciary, the Police and the Armed Forces are there to assist the public representatives to govern a country, and to provide a safe and peaceful environment. These institutions are non-elected and have specific roles to play in the formation of an orderly society for the betterment of the people.

The political setup of a country needs more than one political party in order to keep the people constantly abreast of the development process of the country. But only those should enter politics who pledge to serve the public interest rather than party and personal interests. This process includes educational, scientific, technological, material, moral and spiritual advancement of the human being.

Engaging oneself in clean and positive politics is an enormous task. It can only be accomplished by first chalking out a future strategy based on a foolproof Work Plan for securing the democratic,

social and economic rights of the people. The work plan, in my view, should include the following: -

- (1) Coordinating with like-minded political parties, intellectuals, journalists and specialists in the various fields of life.
- (2) Engaging in social work among the low-income-group *abadis* (settlements) especially providing medical relief, primary education and adult literacy as well as solving the problems of unemployment and removing difficulties of the people at the grassroots level.
- (3) Breaking the economic and political stranglehold of the feudal lords and big absentee-landowners by abolishing *jagirdaris*, *sardaris* and monopolies over the means of production, which are the collective property of the people.
- (4) Reforming the vital institutions of Judiciary, Police and Bureaucracy and making them effective and fruitful.
- (5) Reforming radically the Electoral System, and making the Election Commission fully autonomous.
- (6) Arranging maximum autonomy for the Provinces.
- (7) Allowing free political activity, and throwing open the electronic media for political parties to present their manifestos and programmes.
- (8) Effecting accountability, to a large extent, before general elections are held of corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and all others that have looted national wealth and worked against the national interest. It must be understood that a clean political process is the real catalyst of change.
- (9) Creating among the people mass political awareness and the demand for liberty and democracy. Making a conscious effort collectively to create leaders from the lower and middle classes and to bring them into the Parliament and Senate. Touring extensively the towns and villages, and launching a door-to-door campaign against the prevalent exploitative system in order to upgrade human value and dignity.
- (10) Treating all the citizens of Pakistan as one nation, and rejecting the false concept of 'religious minorities', introduced by the West.

(11) Developing a political culture of coordination and cooperation between the ruling parties and the opposition parties for furthering the common interests of the people.

(12) Mobilizing the people in defence of Peace as against weaponization and war hysteria. Working for establishing a tolerant and humanitarian society free from sectarian tendencies, and advancing towards unity of humankind and oneness of faith.

Should we not be upright enough as to accept and uphold the truth? We should indeed work together to lend meaning to our words so that they may take firm roots in our soil!

# ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF A PEOPLE-ORIENTED BUDGET

Safdar Hasan Siddiqi

*(Presented at the Pre-Seminar Budget Seminar held by the Press Institute, Lahore on April 29, 2003)*

## Essential Features

There has been no progress in meeting the basic needs of the majority of the people. The labour of the many has been benefiting the few. Such economic policies should, therefore, be framed as would serve the greatest interest of the largest number of people.

The economy has been continuously deteriorating. The government has nothing to show by way of achievements on the economic front except a surfeit of FOREX reserves. The multilateral aid agencies have also been active collaborators in this economic mismanagement.

A self-sustained and debt-free economy should be provided to the nation. But what we are witnessing is that through re-scheduling of debts and securing of still more foreign debts, the government is burdening the country's economy dangerously. This has led to the failure in harnessing the ample resources, which the country has in the form of natural resources and manpower. Development in the industrial and agricultural sectors has been badly hit. The bureaucracy is the worst hindrance in the way of industrial development while increase in agricultural production cannot be achieved without doing away with feudalism in its entirety.

Pakistan has added another 3 billion dollars to its debt burden in the last three years. Foreign loans presently stand at Rs. 64.4 billion.

What is required is re-structuring of the economy and stabilizing of the economy. Confidence in the economic and financial system needs to be promoted with a view to generating savings.

Re-scheduling of loan payment, and receipt of new loans, from the donor countries provided Pakistan with a temporary relief, but at the same time has pushed it deeper into the quagmire of loans. It has, in fact, lead to lessening of the country's wealth. Moreover, more stringent conditionalities are being attached to the new loans by the debtor agencies. Recently the government applied General Sales Tax (GTS) on medicines to please the IMF. It has also been decided to apply full percentage of sales tax on electricity. Imposition of GTS on pesticides and fertilizers is also contemplated. When it becomes difficult to maintain regular payments of installments the IMF compels people , through their government, to part with their assets and basic necessities of life, and demands privatization of valuable assets of the country, thus creating unemployment on a large scale. Unfortunately the government has become keen to give their assets in foreign possession even at the cost of putting their people into great stress. Thus the foreign interests are being provided with an opportunity to loot the country's assets.

An opportunity is being provided to foreign countries to pounce upon the vast treasures of gas in Pakistan. This policy will amount to weakening the economic base of the country and to completely mortgaging these assets with the Western countries and the U.S.

Now the provincial governments have been authorized by the Centre to seek loans from the World Bank directly, which is offering 100 million dollars to Sind and Punjab provinces. This will lead to further burdening of the country's economy.

The vast financial needs of the Centre, the sorely limited revenues because of the slow moving economy and pervasive

tax evasion go to hinder economic growth. Under the new fiscal order the district governments may come up with their own taxes, while the provincial governments try to increase their revenue, and the Centre not giving up some of its own taxes. The cumulative taxation thus may be too heavy and ultimately become counter-productive for all. The total number of federal, provincial and local taxes is 101. The finance minister Mr. Shaukat Aziz when he took over said the number of central taxes would be reduced to 3 and provincial taxes to 6 or 7 from 26 or 27. As long as taxes are high and varied, there will be evasion, and the taxation officers and the taxpayers will share the rewards of large-scale evasion. Our corporate taxation of 35 per cent needs to be reduced to 25 per cent if investment is to be promoted and industrialization accelerated.

Federal excise should normally be a provincial tax but it continues to be a federal tax. The Centre is expected to collect Rs. 53 billion in this account this year. The sales tax is a provincial subject but in Pakistan it is federally collected. It is the largest single source of revenue in the country. Only one-third of the total GTS comes to the provinces. The provinces have too many responsibilities and they affect the people directly. These are law and order, education, health, providing adequate infrastructure for trade and industry which includes roads, water supply, drainage, proper traffic system, protecting the environment. Some of the federal taxes should, therefore, be transferred to provinces for direct collection.

The federal revenue fall is expected to be about Rs. 40 billion this year. The provincial share will also drop automatically thus multiplying the financial worries of the provinces.

The problem of federal and provincial governments in Pakistan is not only inadequacy of revenues but also their inefficient and non-productive utilization. And this is due to over 3 billion employees in the federal, provincial and local governments. Too many employees in the rolls of the

government not only mean too much expenditure but also more red tape and larger corruption. But downsizing is not easy when alternate employment is not available and the economic expansion is too slow. Another heavy expenditure is now being incurred in the form of heavy emoluments to the white-collar specialists and advisors taken on contract.

The enormous defence expenditure, at the cost of health and education of the people and development need of the country, must be reduced substantially in the national interest. The arranged confrontation between Pakistan and India by the governments of the two countries in the interest of international maneuverings, if reduced, can very well contribute towards reducing this non-developmental defence expenditure, and consequential improvement of relationship between the two peoples.

Hence the defence sector should come under the purview of Parliament as in other democratic countries. The financial management in the military sector should be open to analysis by the Standing Committee of the parliament. There should be no sacred cows in the government, at a time of increased transparency in administration around the world. The public figures should be free to look into the military administration and its large spending with the purpose of stabilizing the economic system and avoiding any chaos in it.

Development projects are announced for public consumption more in line with monarchical pattern than a democratic order, without getting them cleared by the Planning Commission. As a result the country has been having large budget deficits as high as 10 per cent.

The more we succeed with help of the multilateral agencies to reduce the budgetary deficit the more Pakistanis go below the poverty line as the rate of unemployment keeps shooting up. The rate of unemployment is directly linked to the economic activity in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors,

which is slowing down. During 200-2001 there has been an increase in the poverty index and decreased in the GDP growth rate. The number of poor has increased from 23.65 per cent in 1990 to 34.8 per cent in 2000.

Government policies have lead to immense increase in poverty, unemployment and price rise, thus leading to great hardships for the people.

One way to measure the level of operation of democratic values in any society, nation or country is to see how much importance it attaches to its institutions of accountability. It must be remembered that after a lapse of fifty years our legislators have not given us an Audit Act. It is now before the government for consideration and enactment.

### **Proposals:**

In view of the above discussion it is proposed that:

1. "Direct taxes" should be increased to collect money for state purposes from the rich, and "indirect taxes" that affect mostly the poor should be abandoned or decreased substantially.
2. Rate of Property Tax should be reduced from 25% to 15%, and a thorough survey of residential and commercial properties should be made in order to increase overall increase in this account.
3. Agricultural Tax should be imposed according to the size of the holdings. It should not be imposed on land holdings of 12 ½ acres.
4. Effective land reforms should be effected by abolishing *jagirdari* system. The excess fallow lands and government lands should be immediately given to the landless tenants. All lands measuring more than 4 kanals attached to the bungalows of civil and army officers should be separated from their possession.
5. No further loans should be taken and the outstanding loans should be reduced by a minimum of 10% every

year. All development expenses should be generated internally.

6. Expenditure on running of civil administration presently is Rs.80.6 billion. It should be reduced to by at least 10% to Rs. 72.5 billion. The unnecessary perks of government servants should be reduced and instead their basic salaries be increased.
7. Expenditure on debt servicing presently stands at Rs. 320.2 billion. Its re-scheduling should be sought so as to reduce the amount by 50% to Rs. 160.1 billion.
8. Expenditure on defence of Rs.131.6 billion should be reduced by 25% to Rs. 99.3 billion.
9. Expenditure on subsidies presently standing at Rs. 20.7 billion should be reduced by 25% to Rs. 15.5 billion.
10. Expenditure on public sector development programmes should be increased by 25 %.
11. Expenditure on education, presently amounting to Rs. 6.5 billion, should be increased by 25%.
12. Expenditure on health, presently standing at Rs. 2.1 billion, should be increased by 25%.

**Amount to be received from savings of expenditure:**

Civil government Expenses	10%	Rs. 5.1 billion
Debt Servicing	50%	Rs. 160.1 billion
Defence	25%	Rs. 32.3 billion
Subsidies	25%	Rs. 5.2 billion
<b>Total Savings:</b>		<b>Rs. 202.7 billion</b>

## **PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS - THE WAY AHEAD**

**Safdar Hasan Siddiqi**  
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*(This article was presented at a seminar arranged by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, in collaboration with Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, at the Indian International Centre, New Delhi on August 17, 1998)*

Before dwelling upon the sub-topic of my dissertation "The Way Ahead", I would first touch the issue of the existing Pakistan-India relations. These relations, frankly speaking, are not good; they are pretty bad and will worsen if the people on both sides of the divide do not join their heads and bring out a happy and life-long solution to the problems facing them.

I will begin by saying that the Pakistan-India relations are spotted with many hurdles, big and small.

The first and foremost hurdle is the unholy alliance of the vested interests in both countries, constituting the ruling class, the religious elite and the immensely rich. Their narrow interests require that the mass of the people, especially the working class on whose physical efforts the economy of a country rests, remain illiterate, lack political awareness, is bereft of basic human rights of health, education, proper housing and a certain level of income that could secure for them not only sustenance in food, education, health care and housing but also leisure.

The second big hurdle is the absence of democratic, forthright and honest leadership from amongst the lower and middle classes. This shortcoming in this class (that constitutes the majority) is because they have not been trained in practicing long-term politics that engenders in one political consciousness and the ability to lead. On the contrary, they have been involved in short-term politics that

generate false expectations in the people by selfish, egoistic, power-hungry money-grabbing politicians. Another reason for lack of trained leadership among the lower and middle classes is the refusal of the ruling elite to devolve political and economic powers up to the grassroots level. Such an exercise of devolution would have given effective decision-making powers to the municipal committees and these, in turn, would have enabled the people to throw up their leadership from the lower tiers of society.

The third hurdle is the general psyche of the people on both sides which has been constructed by their political leaders over the last sixty years that India and Pakistan are enemy countries and cannot come to terms and develop friendly and brotherly relations.

The fourth hurdle is lack of right information about one another's developmental efforts in the educational, social and economic fields. The books, magazines and newspapers of both countries present a tainted picture about one another's activities. The print and electronic media is not portraying positive values and constructive statements of well-meaning leaders of public opinion. On the other hand, they are flashing news that causes fear and frustration in the ordinary people on both sides. They have turned into an anti-people mafia. The books in the two countries, pertaining to history and social sciences, misinterpret historical facts and put forth negative stances regarding human relationship.

The fifth hurdle is the non-existence of opportunities for the two peoples of India and Pakistan to freely mingle and exchange views with one another in an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The visa restrictions and high postal rates do not allow such relationship to develop.

The sixth hurdle is the unwillingness in both the peoples to learn from one another, and lack of tolerance of one another's views. Of course there are intellectuals of high standing on both sides but, generally speaking, they are not broad-minded and open to conviction; their historical perspective is blurred and is not based on facts; they only cater to the narrow needs of their countrymen rather

than humanity at large; they have a tendency to divide people rather than to unite them; they serve the needs of their shallow-minded politicians, rather than pick up courage to criticize them and their governments, and give a positive direction to their thinking and doings; they portray human rights not as a serious subject, as a mission with a useful purpose and a definite direction, and as a real opportunity to build their societies and benefit their individuals.; they project life only as an unfettered opportunity to live gaily and carelessly, to their personal benefits, not heeding to others' needs and aspirations.

You may go on adding to these hurdles that come in the way of peaceful and contented living, and healthy transformation of the societies of the two people of India and Pakistan. But I will stop her in order to proceed to the second part of my subject which deals with securing the future of our two countries. It is now high time that our intellectuals play a constructive role creatively, forcefully and fruitfully to soften severity of judgment and encourage forgiveness of past mistakes. Innovation in thought and action could thus chart the right path for people to tread on. They should bring forth and develop positive thoughts through their articles, columns and editorials while keeping in view the real needs of the people

### **The Way Ahead**

The way ahead of us, the two peoples, is quite clear and apparent. Having analyzed and understood the negative aspects of Indo-Pakistan relations, let us now move forward, sure-footedly, to take the steps that are required to ensure positive results.

The first step should be to determine our stance about the true concept of "One Lord, One People, and one Faith" which is the humanist approach to all worldly matters. Granted, we cannot straightaway understand the full impact of this concept. Surely, we will have to tread a long way to imbibe this ideal. But let us start from what we can understand easily viz., the concept of "One Subcontinent, One People" The only basis on which this concept can be developed is by creating love and understanding on the individual

level, and articulating democracy and development on the collective level.

The second step that needs to be taken is that we, the two peoples, devote our energies and resources towards building an effective pressure on our respective governments to open up the avenues for exchange of ideas and goods by:

- Removing visa restrictions between the two countries;
- Minimizing postal rates and travel expenses;
- Giving MNF status by both states to one another for increasing mutual trade;
- Fully democratizing the electoral process, and devolving power to the lower levels with the purpose of throwing up true leadership from the lower and middle classes, and evolving truly democratic governance by representatives of the people;
- Running the business of the state on non-communal lines in order to benefit equally all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed and gender;
- Discouraging religious intolerance and religious elitism, and encouraging our peoples to exchange views and construct useful ideas freely for the betterment of the two societies;
- Giving priority to education and, for that purpose, exchanging delegations of students, teachers, intellectuals and journalists. Revising the curricula and syllabi for schools and colleges bringing them in line with modern requirements, and replacing inessential books with those which impart better education. Constructing fresh concepts of child educational development, and paying especial attention to primary and adult education.
- Exchanging books and magazines extensively.

The third step should be to make the electoral system of the two countries free, fair and transparent in order to enable people of the lower and middle classes to send their representatives to parliament for looking after their interests well enough. Elections should truly reflect majority opinion and become a means of change in the system and not of defending the status quo.

The fourth step should be to open up to the maximum extent trade relations between India and Pakistan. By importing goods at much cheaper rates we will be releasing pressure on economies of both countries.

The fifth step should be to substantially reduce expenditure on arms and ammunition so that maximum resources could be spent in the social sector in the interest of the masses. We should also exert to ban nuclear arms globally for the simple reason that these are weapons of mass destruction, and the costs incurred on this "nuclear game" are prohibitive. A "no-war treaty" should be signed between India and Pakistan in order to allay any fears of attack by either country. These fears are raised falsely in the public mind by the vested interests.

The sixth step should be to initiate a peace movement jointly, in alliance with Japan, China and SAARC countries, which could later on be developed into a World Peace Movement.

Last, but not the least, we should concentrate on developing a culture based on creativity, tolerance, dialogue, understanding and mutual cooperation, and on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Such a forward step will bring out the best in man, and help in making all-out efforts to establish humane and fruitful societies the world over. Such efforts will lead to the flowering of a civilization that humanity could be proud of.

Culture and civilization are the two most valuable end-products of human endeavour. The greatness and progressiveness of a nation is judged by advancements achieved in these fields. The main factors contributing to greatness and progression, as proved by history, are openness, creativity, variety and tolerance. Civilization thrives, and greatness grows, with the clash of ideas and the convergence of diverse influences, knowledge, viewpoints and cultures. For all these to develop and flourish, an environment of peace, friendliness and understanding is necessary. But for the creation of such an environment, dialogue and not confrontation is the basic tool. So let

us stand up and get ourselves counted as the torchbearers of such revolutionary and creative endeavour.

A valuable response to this presentation was received on 25 August 1998 by e-mail from General Dipanker Banerjee (Retd) from New Delhi, as under:

“My dear Siddiqi Sahib,

I am sorry that it was not possible for us to meet again after the seminar at the Indian International Centre. You were very busy and engaged. But it was a delight and a pleasure to meet you in India. It was also high honour. A person of your integrity and devotion to your country, religion and to humankind, wherever you go will cast a spell of friendship all around you. These qualities are particularly valuable in today's tense times, and they are equally difficult to find, on both sides of our border.

We can hope and pray that times will change. But, to make these changes will require a lot of hard work and sacrifice from all of us. Once again my very sincere good wishes to you and to all our friends in Pakistan,

Yours sincerely,  
Dipankar Banerjee